

Chapter 6 — Management Alternatives

Management alternatives and a preliminary assessment of impacts is one of the eight steps that NPS recommends for the completion of a NHA feasibility study. Four different management alternatives were proposed for discussion in this process: continuation of current practices (no action), a Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta NHA, a Delta State Heritage Corridor, and a locally designated Delta Heritage Area. These alternatives and their potential impacts were outlined in a public review memo and local participants discussed the positive and negative implications of each of the four alternatives at a public meeting in July 2011.

Alternative 1

Continuation of current practices

NHA designation would not be pursued under this option; therefore the relevant federal assistance and seed money would not be granted. Efforts for historic preservation, signage, economic development, public education, marketing, and other goals of a Delta NHA could continue to be pursued under their current auspices. The resources currently owned and operated by nonprofits; and federal, state, and local government entities would continue to be maintained and made available for public use under existing policies. There would be no new NPS program dedicated exclusively to providing technical assistance and no additional federal funding. State and local government, private nonprofit organizations and foundations, and for-profit organizations would continue to be the primary sources of funds for the protection and interpretation of heritage resources in the Delta.

Alternative 2

Creation of a Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area

This management alternative involves congressional designation of a NHA in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Under this alternative, the NPS would provide technical assistance to the management entity of the NHA. The Delta would achieve national recognition as a place of special significance and would be eligible to receive federal seed money for the NHA. The seed money can be utilized to leverage funds from public and private sources. Existing NHAs leverage an average of \$8 for every \$1 of federal seed money. NHA funds can be utilized to undertake projects outlined in the management plan which could include interpretive signage, historic preservation, and visitor promotion.

While NHAs are not NPS units, NHAs are considered part of the ‘NPS family’. NPS plays an advisory role to the NHA management entity through technical assistance for planning and implementation activities. NHA designation enables the NHA management entity to utilize the NPS arrowhead

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symbol for marketing the region, and a link to the NHA's website is placed on the NPS website to help direct visitors to the region. Additionally, certain grant programs such as the National Park Foundation grants are open to NHAs as well as NPS units.

As stated in the mission statement, a Delta NHA can serve as an opportunity to recognize, enhance, and promote 'Delta as a Place' in order to help cultivate and retain appreciation and understanding by residents and visitors of the Delta. For quite some time the Delta has been a lesser known region of California, and even persons living as close as the San Francisco Bay Area, Sacramento region, and Stockton region, know little about the Delta. Designation as a NHA would give national recognition to the role of the Delta in California and American history, and draw attention to the Delta as a place of special significance, both ecologically and culturally. A NHA could help gain visibility of the Delta as a visitor destination nationally and internationally, which can lead to economic development opportunities. Currently, most of the heritage tourism attractions in the Delta such as museums, have limited staff and funding, and a Delta NHA could help increase visitation to these places which could help expand their resources. An increase in visibility could also lead more visitors to State Parks and State Recreation Areas in the Delta, which could help sustain the units economically, and help to improve visitor amenities.

Alternative 3

California Delta Heritage Corridor (State designated)

California State Parks developed a Central Valley Vision Implementation Plan in 2009. This plan recommends establishing five Central Valley driving routes as heritage corridors to draw visitors to heritage attractions. One of the recommended heritage corridors is the California Delta Heritage Corridor, which would link historic Delta towns, recreation sites, ecotourism areas, and agritourism sites. These heritage corridors would be designated under the California Recreational Trails Act, as provided in Public Resources Code Sections 5070.3, 5071, and 5073.

A State Heritage Corridor would, if funds were available, have some of the same potential benefits as a NHA. Benefits may include improved visitor information (maps, wayfinding signs and kiosks, brochures, etc.) and public education about the corridor's historical, natural, and recreational assets. The enhancement of tourism activities in the Delta would be a likely outcome that could assist with economic development. Like a NHA, a State Heritage Corridor could be a valuable tool to educate the public and visitors about the Delta and could help recognize, enhance and promote 'Delta as a Place'. NPS staff would not play an advisory role (unless assistance is granted through a different

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program). A State Heritage Corridor would not be eligible for the seed money that is granted with NHA designation, and there are no apparent sources of state funds to support its planning or implementation now. However, it could still be a valuable symbol of the desires of local organizations to develop partnerships and seek funding from other public/private sources, if local partners choose to use it as a vehicle for those activities.

The State Heritage Corridor designation could still be pursued for the Delta, regardless of whether or not the Delta receives NHA designation. While planning for it would require a separate process, the Delta NHA feasibility study could serve as a valuable reference as it contains information that is potentially relevant to both designations, such as proposed themes, heritage area resources, etc.

Alternative 4

Locally designated Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Heritage Area

A final option is a Delta Heritage Area (DHA) which is designated, planned, and managed by a local entity. Like a NHA, projects could be undertaken, such as historic preservation and interpretive signage which recognize, enhance, and promote ‘Delta as a Place’. Projects which increase visitor amenities in the Delta, such as public restrooms, waste receptacles, and directional signage could still be developed. Like the State Heritage Corridor option, a DHA would not be eligible for the federal financial assistance nor the NPS partnership that NHAs are eligible for. However, federal resources and assistance could still be sought through other programs. A DHA would not receive the national recognition that a NHA would, or the statewide recognition that a State Heritage Corridor would, but still be a tool for the Delta to gain more visibility as a region, which could lead to economic and educational benefits. A DHA would not have to obtain Congressional approval or go through annual congressional funding cycles, and therefore could be initiated more quickly than a NHA.

Evaluation

The four alternatives described above were presented at the July 2011 public meeting and Alternative 2 was the most favored: creation of a Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area. Meeting participants recognized the following potential benefits of a Delta NHA:

- A mixture of private and public collaboration that vests control at local level for establishing priorities and allocating federal funds.
- Federal recognition to draw attention to ‘Delta as a Place’.

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- Optimizing the likelihood for success in creating a regionally integrated approach to wildlife habitat, agritourism, recreation, etc., this is significant to achieve economic sustainability for the Delta.

The only con identified at this meeting about a Delta NHA was that concerns have been expressed by some Delta locals about impacts on property rights. Chapter 10 discusses tools that can alleviate these concerns.

Participants of the meeting were generally not in favor of Alternative 1, continuation of current practices, due to lack of local control. Alternative 3, a Delta State Heritage Corridor, was also not generally a favored alternative due to lack of funding capabilities. Alternative 4, a locally designated DHA, was identified by some as the next best alternative to a NHA, but concerns were raised about this option due to the lack of funding and national stature.